

VZCZCXRO4511
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2446 1911818
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 101818Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5641
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHWSR/WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002446

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2016
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [PNAT](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MOI OFFICIAL SAYS WOMEN CANNOT OBTAIN PASSPORTS
WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM MALE RELATIVES

REF: 05 BAGDAD 00174

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARGARET SCOBAY, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. MOI Director of Nationality and Travel Yasseen al-Yassiri told PolOffs June 26 that Iraqi women were once again required to have their husbands' permission (or that of another male relative) in order to obtain a passport. This requirement, which was in effect during Saddam Hussein's regime, was reportedly overturned in 2004 at the instigation of then Minister of State for Women's Affairs Nermin Othman (reftel). Yassiri insisted, however, that the rule had never been abrogated. End Summary

[¶2.](#) (C) At a June 26 meeting with MOI Director of Nationality and Travel al-Yassiri, PolOffs asked about reports that Iraqi women were again required to obtain their husbands' (or other male relatives') permission in order to obtain passports. Al-Yassiri replied that this was indeed the case and that women were "comfortable with the process." He was unable, however, to produce a copy of any rule to this effect. PolOffs noted that this process appeared at odds with the Constitution's provisions against gender discrimination and for freedom of travel (note: Articles 14 and 44).

[¶3.](#) (C) PolOff subsequently raised the issue with Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Mikhail Salim and Minister of State for Women's Affairs Faten Abd al-Rahman. Both ministers expressed reluctance to approach the Minister of Interior on the issue.

[¶4.](#) (C) Former Minister of State for Women's Affairs Nermin Othman (currently Environment Minister) insisted to PolOff that the regulation cited by Yassiri had been overturned during the Jafari Government (reftel). Director of the Research Department for the Council of Representatives, Saifaldin Abdurrahman, told PolOff July 5 that his staff had conducted a comprehensive check of the Official Gazette and could find no indication of a restriction on a woman's right to independently apply for a passport. He suggested that Yassiri's statement might point to the existence of an internal MoI regulation that could be changed by the Minister.

[¶5.](#) (C) Comment: If Yassiri is correct, it would reflect a step back for women's rights in Iraq. Post will continue to engage the MOI on this issue. We will also seek to learn how a restriction on women's rights to apply for passports could have been reintroduced without a transparent legislative or rule-making process. Although it is not clear what role Yassiri may have had in resurrecting the "requirement", it is clear from his comments where he stands on the issue. Even if we are successful in encouraging MOI to formally rescind these procedures, we may continue to see resistance from him and others in the Iraqi bureaucracy.

